

The National Tribune

A Monthly Journal devoted to the interests of the Soldiers and Sailors of the late war, and all Pensioners of the United States.

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TO THE SOLDIERS OF THE UNION.

Unite and Organize at once to secure the passage of the Bounty Bill.

The events of the war, and the men of the war, are fast fading from the public attention. Its history is growing to be an "Old, Old Story."

Public interest is weakening day by day. The memory of march, and camp, and battle-field, of the long and manly endurance, of the superb and uncomplaining courage, of the mass of sacrifice that redeemed the Nation, is fast dying out. Those who rejoice in the liberty and peace secured by the soldier's suffering and privation, accept the benefits, but deny or forget the benefactor.

Repeatedly, while the recollection of these great achievements were fresh, Congress, in one house or both, has passed the Bounty Bill, equalizing, to all soldiers of the Republic, that tribute which all men then confessed to be their due. But the bill has not yet become a law.

Its enemies—the enemies of the soldier—have invented devices from time to time to hinder its full and complete success.

If this session of Congress is allowed to pass without final action the hope of success is gone.

We, the soldiers of the Country, must abandon at once all loose and straggling formations; we must come into the line of battle, solid, compact, with colors flying, and the music of old patriotic tunes; we must make our antagonists, the demagogues and time-servers, respect us, and they will not respect us until they see our embattled strength.

Let it be known that no member of the House of Representatives can count on the vote of the soldier, or the soldier's friend, unless he is the prompt and ready friend of this measure; let it be known that no Senator can be elected by our aid in giving him the General Assembly of his State, except on the same conditions, and the half-hearted men, who boggle over economy and forget justice and gratitude, will be with us.

It will cost money, no doubt, to do right by the soldiers. It may cost \$20,000,000, but it is not half of what Congress has been asked to give, and has given for speculative and doubtful internal improvements.

The loyal and faithful people of the Country will pay it without grumbling, in the time it will require to perfect the system; and if there are any in these days of GENERAL PACIFICATION, who refuse to do their duty by the defenders of the Country, we want to put them fairly on the record. They asked our lives—we offered them; they asked our courage and self-denial—we gave it freely and gladly.

The Country stands to-day saved, redeemed, glorious in all its magnificent proportions, and the success is due to us—the rank and file and officers of the Army and Navy, the volunteer and regular soldiers, seamen, and marines of the United States.

We made no bargains with the Nation. The Nation would have offered anything for success; but we did our plain manly duty, in the darkest hours; and now, that all is light and sunshine, we ask recognition and material aid.

Comrades! the success of the Bounty Bill depends upon yourselves. Each man of you is the center of a circle of influence. Each man is a component part, a scattered drop, of a current which, if united, will sweep to success with a majesty of strength.

Let it be your duty to unite, and to unite at once, and present before the Congress of the United States the same unbroken front which won many a glorious battle-field.

THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE is at your service, devoted to this purpose, and only too glad if, as an humble bugler, it can sound the call, which shall bid you "fall in" and "rally on the colors."

But remember, comrades, that you may wait too long, and if you let pass this opportunity, every sign of the times indicates that in a year or two it will be too late, and that the high places will be filled by those whose hearts will not beat responsive to the equity of your demands or the force of your claims of faithful service to that American Nation, which you have made, "One and Indivisible."

PENSION OFFICE REPORT.

We publish in this issue of the NATIONAL TRIBUNE the Report of the Commissioner of Pensions and also that of the Surgeon General, so far as the latter relates to Pensions.

Mr. Commissioner Bentley notices with just pride the increased efficiency and accuracy of his office, and the results of the new system introduced and carried into effect by him in the reorganization of the office, the distribution of subjects and the improved discipline and morale of the force of employees.

For all these good results the country and the pensioners are greatly indebted to Mr. Bentley, and no one who has had business to do with the office can fail to recognize the great improvement that has been made.

With a reduced force better results have been obtained. This simple statement covers the case and reflects great honor upon the organizing and informing mind that has devised and managed the system, as well as to the force of officers who have effectively aided in carrying out the plan.

We had occasion in a late issue to dissent from the recommendation of the Commissioner, repeated in this report, for the abolition of examining surgeons and the substitution of peculiar boards in districts covering large territory and involving the examination of many cases. We have seen no reason to change our views already expressed and do not care to repeat the arguments now. It is sufficient to say that, in

our judgment, the change proposed would be a practical denial to many claimants of any hearing at all, and that the delays, loss of time, and necessary expense incident to the system proposed would work irretrievable injury to the class most deserving of consideration—that very large class who have no money to pay to enforce their claim against the United States.

With this exception the Report is a document of great value, both as showing the present working of the Pension Office and as explaining very clearly the causes of the outrageous and inexcusable delay in the adjustment of pension claims and bringing them to final conclusion. This delay is naturally charged by claimants and their friends upon the attorneys in charge. But the disgraceful fact is that it is due to the persistent refusal of Congress to furnish sufficient working force in the office of the Surgeon General to keep up with the demand. That force has been steadily decreased since 1874.

In the year ending June 30, 1874, ninety-four clerks were employed in that office, and the business was kept up to the standard.

July 1, 1874, this force of clerks was reduced to sixty-six and the work began to fall behind.

On July 1, 1876, there were 12,919 cases in arrear for that year, and yet in October, 1876, this clerical force, proved insufficient, was still further reduced to forty-six; and thus, by the action of Congress itself, the pension claimant is postponed and delayed in the Surgeon-General's Office for more than a year and a quarter.

This reduction has been made in the face of the protest of the Commissioner of Pensions and of the Surgeon General, with full knowledge of the inadequacy of the force employed, and with full knowledge of the horrible delay and disappointment to thousands of the poor and needy, whose claims upon the nation are the highest and most sacred.

It is without doubt the most criminal legislation ever yet attempted, and the most cruel in its results.

Congress finds money enough to pay clerks, at \$6 per day, for a multitude of committees; it finds money enough to indulge in all sorts of gratuitous printing and distribution of worthless documents, and a thousand other forms of expenditure; but when the crippled veteran or the widow and orphans of the dead soldier ask for prompt adjudication of their just claims against the Government, this paltry and petty-larceny economy denies the necessary machinery and defers to some distant day the opportunity of examination and decision.

The Surgeon General shows by his Report the absolute necessity of fifty (50) additional clerks in order to begin to do justice, and an hundred to do it quickly as it should be done, and every pensioner and pension claimant and every friend of justice and fair dealing should hold every member that votes against it as recreant to the cause of justice and humanity.